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No. XIV.

Church Association of the Diocese of Toronto.

**To the Corresponding Members of the Church Association of the
Diocese of Toronto.**

DEAR BRETHREN,

At the close of this second year of active operation as an associated body of Members of the Church of England, united for the purpose of maintaining our beloved Church in the simplicity of her Protestant worship and the purity of her scriptural teaching, the Members of the Church Association can look back with grateful acknowledgement to Almighty God, under whose blessing, as they devoutly believe, they have been led, through unlooked for difficulties and trials, to the realization of important results; and by whose sovereign guidance the events of the past year have been overruled for the more effective maintenance of the principles which they have pledged themselves to defend.

Cheered by the hearty sympathy and encouragement of many of their fellow Churchmen in other Dioceses, they would specially acknowledge the gratifying reassurance derived from the addresses forwarded from the Montreal Diocese, in one of which, signed by upwards of 300 Members of our Church; and in another, bearing the honored names of twenty-six Clergymen, including those of the Dean, and of Canons, Rectors, and influential Ministers in that Diocese, this Association is assured of their entire approval of its course of procedure, and "their earnest prayer that, with the blessing of God, the present crisis may be so overruled as the more firmly to build up in our Church the principles of the Reformation."

Thus encouraged and strengthened in a work which they believe, more than ever, calls for the unflagging zeal, and united exertions of all who truly love and value the Church of England a Protestant Church, sealed in its fidelity to the grand protest

of the Reformation against the errors and corruptions of Romanism, by the blood of many faithful martyrs; it is with no inclination to relax their exertions in this great cause, that the Executive Committee of the Church Association of the Diocese of Toronto now invite the attention of its Members,—and especially of those in other Dioceses,—to the desire expressed by many for its reconstruction, or establishment on a more extended basis.

Although this Association has only been known under its present name for two years, it is the expansion of an older organization which existed for years, under the name of "The Church of England Evangelical Association," of which the Very Rev. the Dean of Toronto was President, and the present Bishop of Niagara, then Archdeacon Fuller, was the first Vice-President. In its address to the Members of the Church in the Diocese of Toronto, issued in 1869, it draws attention to the "good measure adopted "in regard to the important question of Ritualism at the last Provincial Synod;" but comments on the strenuous opposition it received, and thus proceeds: "There were in favour of condemning "these novel practices in the Church, which have been lately "declared illegal by the highest courts in England, very small "majorities of the whole Synod; and we are sorry to say that we "can find, in the published reports of the proceedings, no single "instance where the names of a majority of the lay delegates from "this Diocese appear in favor of condemning those practices."

This was a condition of things well calculated to excite alarm, and to prove that the protestantism of our Church was in no degree fairly represented by the delegates who professed to represent the country parishes and missions in the Diocesan Synod. Alike in the addresses issued in that and the following year the Association pressed on the Laity the necessity of looking carefully to the character and views of the delegates to whom they committed the important trust of representing them on the Synod; and in their address for 1870, they strongly expressed their "belief that "the great mass of the Laity of the Church of England throughout "Canada is soundly protestant at heart, and if truly represented "at their Synods cannot fail to exercise a most vital influence on "the progress of the Canadian branch of the Church."

In the same address the Association pressed on the attention of the Church the great importance of the then unsettled question of patronage. The selection and approval of students to be admitted into the theological course, and still more, their final admission to Holy orders, are under the control of the bishop; nor without his license can any ordained Minister hold a charge within the diocese. So far, then, the authority and supreme control of the Lord Bishop

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of the Diocese is abundantly recognised. It appears to be a very moderate demand, that from among all the clergy who have thus been certified by the Bishop as in good standing, and fitted for parochial duty, the heads of families, or the body of communicants in the parish shall be allowed to select the Minister most acceptable to themselves. To all new missions the appointment of clergymen must rest with the Bishop, the Mission Board, or some body specially entrusted with the duty. But where a congregation builds its own Church, Sunday School House, and parsonage, and guarantees the whole portion of the income not derived from the Clergy Reserves or other Common Church Funds, it is difficult to conceive of any means so calculated to check their liberality, as the placing over them a Minister, either unacceptable to them; or even one in whose choice they have been allowed no voice. The heads of Christian families desire a Christian Minister, in whose wise counsel and faithful teaching they have entire confidence. To him they are to look for the admission of their children into the Church by the Holy Sacrament of Baptism, and their instruction and training, till they can conscientiously take upon themselves the vows then made, and be admitted in confirmation to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership in the Christian Church. To him they are to look as to a sympathising friend in every joy, and in every trial of life; as the counsellor of their children in maturer years, and whose special services they are to ask when their sons and daughters leave the domestic hearth, to form new homes of their own. They desire to have as their minister one in whom they can repose implicit confidence, and on whose faithful Christian counsel they can rely in every emergency. How difficult must it be to establish such relations with one not only intruded on a congregation without their special wishes being consulted; but even at times where strong objections are felt to the person selected for the cure.

In the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the United States, the right of the people to the choice of their own Minister is undisputed; and no evil is felt to result from it. It is treating a Christian congregation as children to deny them a voice in a matter in which they alone are supremely interested. It cannot be imagined that the heads of Christian families, including the most aged and experienced members of the Church, would regard otherwise than as a most solemn and responsible duty, the selection of one to whom they, and all who are most dear to them, are to look for counsel in the hour of sickness, and on the bed of death; and from whom, amid bitterest bereavement, when loved ones are committed to the grave, they trust to receive the reassurance of their faith in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

Bearing all this in view, it seemed to the members of the Association then, as it seems to many thoughtful members of the Church still, that nothing is so calculated to give renewed life to the Church, to promote harmony between its Clergy and people, and to beget that genuine liberality which springs from love even more than a sense of duty, than the restoring to the people some just share in the choice of the clergyman who is to minister to them in holy things.

Whilst pressing those, and other important questions on the notice of the church, the address of the Association in 1870 concluded with a renewed appeal to the members of every congregation on the importance of securing a true representation of their views in the Synod, by the choice of their lay Delegates, for "by their opinions and actions there, they influence the voice of our Church in maintaining or slighting the great principles by which the Church of England asserts her CATHOLICITY in accordance with the scriptural doctrines embodied in her Articles, and her PROTESTANTISM in the rejection of all those errors by which the Church before the Reformation had substituted a justification by sacraments and works of men, instead of *justification by Faith only*, as declared in the Eleventh Article of our Church."

It was the Association which had thus, for years, been striving to maintain the Evangelical teaching, and the Protestant services of our Church, which was reorganized on a broader basis in 1873, under the name of the Church Association of the Diocese of Toronto. It is abundantly apparent that, though constituted on a narrower basis, it had had the same object in view. But the condition of things alike in the Mother Church, and that of Canada appeared to them to call for more energetic proceedings among all the faithful members of the Church of England, to expose the insidious wiles of designing men, unfaithful to their ordination vows; and to resist unauthorised changes and innovations in the services of our Church, and in the doctrines taught from its pulpits, and in its Sunday Schools.

Alike in the first Address issued by the Association under its new organization, and in the Occasional Paper which followed, entitled "*What is Ritualism?*" it was made abundantly apparent that the evils which it specially aimed at opposing, were in no respect peculiar to one Diocese; but affected, more or less, the whole Church in Canada. It seemed, however, to the original founders, that their object would be best effected by directing their efforts specially to their own Diocese, leaving to their fellow-churchmen in other Dioceses to do what seemed best in the peculiar circumstances of each. It has been the earnest desire of the

Executive Committee, to whom the responsibility of carrying on the work of the Association has been entrusted, to put forward no statements in reference to objectionable teachings or practices, until they had thoroughly satisfied themselves of their accuracy in every detail ; and this they felt could best be secured by confining their action to the proceedings within their own Diocese. In dealing with matters lying outside of it, they must necessarily have been compelled to depend on others for the accuracy of their statements.

But it has become apparent that this limitation of action, as a Diocesan Association, fails to satisfy the desires and requirements of many Members of the Church with whom they are in perfect accord in doctrine and fellowship.

Both Clergymen and Laymen in other Dioceses have hastened to express their sympathy with the action of this Association in the most practical form ; alike by contributing to its funds, and by seeking to be enrolled as Corresponding Members. This has been followed by numerous and urgent applications for its organization on a wider basis ; and by requests for authority to form Affiliated or Branch Associations corresponding to those of the Association of the Mother Church in England.

The Executive Committee cannot fail to recognise among leading Clergymen and Laymen in other Dioceses, whose names are already on the list of Corresponding Members, many whose counsel and co-operation in the responsible duties now entrusted to themselves, they would gladly welcome ; or into whose hands they would willingly resign the supreme control in the further work of this Association. But it appears to be indispensable for the successful carrying out of the object which all have at heart, that concentrated action, and an untrammelled responsibility, should be secured to a central committee whose counsel and co-operation can be relied upon in any emergency. Even now, with the limitation of the Committee to a single Diocese, delay is unavoidable in such important correspondence and publications as the unlooked for events of the past year have given rise to ; and this must be greatly increased by so widening the basis as to involve the necessity of concurrent action among Members of an Executive Committee selected from various Canadian Dioceses, even though limited within the compass of Quebec and Ontario.

It has been pressed on the Executive Committee, from other Dioceses, that the desired end would be best attained by having a Central, or parent Association, with branches co-operating with it, as is now done in the case of the Church Association in England ; each branch to be a distinct organization, in so far as carrying on

the special work relating to its own Diocese, and having the entire control and administration of its own Mission Fund are concerned; yet forming a part of one Canadian Church Association, and being represented on the Central Executive Committee.

These statements and suggestions are submitted to the consideration of the corresponding members in other dioceses, in response to numerous letters and appeals on the subject. It is scarcely necessary to repudiate the idea of the Committee, or the members of the Association of the diocese of Toronto, having any inclination to repel such propositions for more united action. The response of their friends in other dioceses has already greatly encouraged and strengthened them by the assurance of hearty sympathy thus afforded to them; and they now address them in reply, in order to invite their mature determination as to the course of action best calculated to accomplish the great object which all have at heart. The members of this Association recognise the inestimable value of co-operation and united action in a cause which is in no degree sectional; but embraces the interests of our common Church. Thus far they have endeavoured—as they trust, under the divine guidance and blessing—to carry out the purposes for which the Association was formed; and they have reason to believe that their labours have not been in vain. Now that their object is clearly understood and approved of by so many brethren in other dioceses, they would gladly accept of leadership in this good work at the hands of the earnest body of clergy and laity of the diocese of Montreal, who have accorded to them such welcome sympathy and encouragement; or resign the control of it to any united body chosen from different dioceses, which may be found best fitted to command the sympathy of all earnest and devout protestant members of the Church of England in Canada. To such a body they will gladly render the most hearty co-operation.

But, however the organization of a central executive body be determined, or wherever its place of meeting be chosen, it is indispensable for success that it be placed on the most unfettered basis consistent with the great object which all have at heart. It was felt at starting, that the work contemplated must involve considerable outlay; and experience has amply confirmed this. But the cheerful liberality with which ample funds have hitherto been placed at the disposal of the Executive Committee, abundantly proves what the Church itself may look for when the sympathies of a devoted and earnest Christian people are in hearty accord with the Clergy and the whole mission work of the Church.

The Church Association in England has nearly 200 Affiliated and Branch Associations, with a still larger number of local

Secretaries, including both Clergy and Laity of high position and influence. In the Report for 1873, it is stated: "From these branches much practical support is obtained. By their combined action the general movement can alone be efficiently maintained. Isolated efforts are comparatively of little avail when such an organized system of attack is so dexterously conducted and so persistently arrayed against the Church." But while the Council, in reviewing the work of the year, record their deep thankfulness to Almighty God for the help and strength given to them: "Already," they say, "the Association has made itself felt as a power in the land; its progress has been marked with many and signal blessings; and our enemies themselves being judges, it is the great breakwater between Evangelical truth and Sacerdotal pretensions;"—yet they add: "The Council feel the absolute necessity of being allowed an untrammelled course of action, in order that everything may be done calmly and prudently to meet the ever-shifting policy of those who seem determined, if possible, to undermine the foundations of Protestant Christianity. Rash and ill-judged attempts, however they might for a time satisfy the desire of those friends who think that nothing is being done unless the noise of the movement is heard, would only frustrate the cause that we all have at heart, while they might imperil the very existence of the Association. To hasten slowly is often the safest speed. Steady progress can alone secure final success."

This assuredly is no time for the cry of "peace! peace!" when the Church is exposed to insidious revolt against all the grand triumphs won for her by the blood of martyrs and confessors at the Reformation. But the members of this Association seek for no party triumph. They earnestly desire to avoid a controversial spirit; and while refusing all compromise where the vital truths derived from Holy Scripture, and embodied in the Liturgy and Articles of the book of Common Prayer, are imperilled; they know and feel that the real object they have at heart, in aiming at a vital revival in their beloved Church, of that evangelical and spiritual truth, for which the martyrs of the Reformation willingly laid down their lives; can only be attained by striving to work in the spirit of their Divine Master. Wherever they have failed in this, they know that they have tended to defeat the cause they have at heart, and to give its enemies occasion to triumph.

But whatever organisation may be finally determined upon, those who undertake it must count the cost. Already the work of the Association involves a laborious correspondence; and the

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multiplication of branches, with any attempt at the regulation or control of local action, must greatly increase both the labor and cost; and add to the responsibilities of the Central Committee. At this stage in the history of the Association, while the Executive Committee cannot longer delay some response to the numerous and urgent offers of co-operation in the formation of Branch Associations; they feel that it would be presumptuous in them to attempt to define any plan of action beyond their own Diocese; however willingly they are prepared to respond to the wishes of their fellow-churchmen, who desire a more extended organization, and more comprehensive efforts in the common cause. Experience will show their brethern in other Dioceses whether the object which all have in view, can be best secured by following the example of Toronto, and forming separate Diocesan Associations in friendly correspondence and co-operation with each other; or by a more closely united action on some common basis. This, therefore, they commend to their earnest consideration, and they will gladly respond to any hearty and united response, tending to unite all faithful members of our Church, in once more contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Meanwhile the Executive Committee of this Association feel justified in saying that the experience of the past year has abundantly proved the need of such an organization to uphold the great principles of Protestantism and of Evangelical truth bequeathed to us by the Fathers of our Church at the Reformation; and to preserve to her, and to our children, the simplicity of her Protestant worship, and the purity of her scriptural teaching, as derived from the Word of God, and embodied in her Liturgy and Articles.

The Executive Committee will feel glad to receive, without delay, such views and practical suggestions as the members of the Association desire to offer in respect to a matter of so much importance to its future success in the accomplishment of the object for which it has been instituted.

Signed on behalf of the Executive Committee.

B. H. DIXON, } *Honorary Secretaries.*
J. GILLESPIE, }

TORONTO, 11th June, 1875.

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